



TRANSPORTATION SAFETY COMMISSION

CITY OF HARRISONBURG, VIRGINIA

TO: Transportation Safety Commission Members, Council members, City Manager Kurt Hodgen, Assistant City Manager Evan Vass

FROM: Thanh H. Dang, Public Works Planner

DATE: January 14, 2010

RE: Transportation Safety Commission Summary from January 7, 2010 Meeting

The Transportation Safety Commission met on Thursday January 7, 2010 at the City Municipal Building, 345 S. Main St.

Members and Advisory Members present included: Bill Blessing (Chair), Doug Stader (DMV), Officer Greg Deeds (Police), Drew Williams (Public Works), Thanh Dang (Public Works), Lee Eschelman (JMU, Sgt. William Keller (Police), Mary-Hope Vass (Police), Diane Rolls (Police), and Ben Wyse (citizen).

Guests Present include: None.

Citizens are always provided the opportunity to voice their views/concerns about any item before the commission. It is the policy of the Commission to move the agenda item to the beginning of the meeting when citizens attend Commission meetings to avoid detaining citizens for the entire meeting. However, any citizen is welcome to stay for the entire meeting.

Welcome

Old Business

1. Storm Drainage Grates / Bicycle Safety - Update

Ms. Dang updated the Commission that the 5 drainage grates listed as Priority 1, as presented to City Council have been replaced and that positive feedback has been received from citizens. After the City Council meeting, 3 additional drainage grates were brought to staff's attention for consideration as Priority 1 and were included in the chart attached to the Commission's December meeting minutes; notably is the grate on S. Mason St. next to Wachovia Bank. City staff will be working to replace these additional grates as soon as possible.

Sgt. Keller noted that there is a grate on Park Rd. near Mt. Clinton Pike that should be reviewed. Mr. Wyse, who is a regular bicyclist, stated that he will take a look at it and will let Public Works staff know of his assessment.

New Business

2. Fatality on Betts Rd.

Sgt. Keller and Ofc. Deeds presented information regarding the vehicular accident at the 300 block of Betts Rd. that occurred on November 28, 2009. This was a single vehicle accident in which a vehicle struck a tree and which resulted in 2 seriously injured and 1 fatality. This accident is still under investigation by Harrisonburg Police and no criminal charges have been made. During the accident investigation, neighbors described other vehicles that have driven Betts Rd. and got stuck in the side ditch around the curve (required assistance; no injuries in those past events).

Although the posted speed limit on Betts Rd. is 25 mph, Sgt. Keller estimates that vehicles are generally traveling 35-40 mph, which is dangerous given the road conditions – curves, narrow width, loose gravel, etc. Commission members discussed that there is significant cut through traffic on Betts Rd. however it was noted that Betts Rd. is a public street and that motorists need to drive safely.

Commission members recommended that (a) the speed limit sign be posted within 100 ft. of the city limits on the westbound side of Betts Rd., (b) a caution sign indicating safe maximum speed around the curve ahead be posted in both directions.

3. Streetscape Phase II

Ms. Dang provided an update of the Streetscape Phase II project, which is proposed between Bruce St. to Elizabeth St. on Main St., excluding sidewalk work at Court Square (which will be included in a future phase). The City, with the assistance from the Shenandoah Planning District Commission (CSPDC), submitted a Transportation Enhancement Grant application on December 1, 2009 requesting funds for improvements. Improvements were estimated to cost a total of \$877,310, with the City contributing a 20% match.

Included in this project is new brick sidewalks, enhanced crosswalks - likely will be Streetprint XD, similar to the Streetprint utilized around the Linda Ln. roundabout and crosswalks, new pedestrian signals at existing traffic signals, replacement of existing traffic signal poles to match Streetscape design, street furniture, waterline upgrade from a 6" to 10" pipe, and possibly other utility upgrades.

Notification of grant award is not expected until Summer 2010. The Commission took no action on this item.

4. S. Main St. Median

Mr. Williams led a review and discussion of the S. Main St. Median project plans. This project is a partnership between the City and James Madison University. A landscape median is proposed along S.

Main St. between Port Republic Rd. and Cantrell Ave. The median will be placed within the existing footprint of the center turn lane, and breaks within the median will be made to accommodate left turns at key intersections.

This project will provide the following safety improvements:

- Proposed restriction of left hand turns at Fairview Ave. to reduce conflict with turning movements at Port Republic Rd. intersection. City staff is looking at “pork chops” to restrict left turns.
- Proposed cantilevered limestone wall, 2-ft. off the ground inside the median with tree landscaping to discourage pedestrians from crossing midblock.

A discussion was had about a lack of median between the intersections with Grace St. and Cantrell Ave., due to vehicle stacking length needed for left turn movements from northbound S. Main St. to westbound Cantrell Ave.

Ofc. Deeds suggested using sticker bushes to keep pedestrians out of the landscaped median.

Estimated cost estimate of \$1.4 million and discussions with the University indicate that the project could begin as early as Summer 2010, although no timetable has been confirmed. The Commission supported the improvements proposed.

5. S. Main St. & Port Republic Rd. Intersection

The S. Main St. Median discussion continued into a discussion about pedestrian safety concerns at S. Main St. & Port Republic Rd. intersection. Conceptual plans for improvements for this intersection have not been included in the S. Main St. Median project.

As previously discussed by the Commission, and as is proposed to be included in the new Street Improvement Plan of the City’s Comprehensive Plan, is the construction of a slip lane for vehicles turning right from westbound Port Republic Rd. to northbound S. Main St. James Madison University owns the property at the corner and previous discussions with JMU representatives indicated support for the slip lane.

A question was raised about enforcement of vehicles not yielding to pedestrians who are crossing with the pedestrian signal. Sgt. Keller noted that it is difficult for Harrisonburg Police to enforce. In many cases, the pedestrians were not yet in the crosswalk and state law only states that cars must stop for pedestrians “in” the crosswalk.

Further discussion was had about needing to educating motorists and pedestrians, but it was noted that it was difficult to reach “everyone.” Each media type utilized reaches only a fraction of the public. Recognized was the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Metropolitan Planning Organization’s radio PSAs, which have been programmed since 2007.

The Commission supports the slip lane proposed.

6. Snow Removal on Sidewalks

Mr. Van Wyk (not in attendance) asked if the Commission could review snow removal on sidewalks. In an email, Mr. Van Wyk says that he “would like to see the city take the sidewalk snow removal ordinance more seriously than they have in the past.” He recognized that the city rarely has storms of appreciable accumulation, but noted that when we do, many sidewalks become impassible. Noted were S. High St., NE corner of Grace St. and High St., and Maryland Ave. near Keister Elementary school.

Sgt. Keller noted that the December snowfall event brought between 24-26” of snowfall. Discussion was had about snow plows in the streets pushing snow sometimes onto sidewalks, particularly on streets in which there is not a grassed buffer between the street and the sidewalk. Also noted was that, when the snow melts a little and freezes up again at night, that shoveling snow becomes more difficult for city forces and residents.

City forces, including Public Works and School Board, have identified locations and remove snow from sidewalks. As of this meeting, the Maryland Ave. sidewalks in front of Keister Elementary school have been cleared.

Sgt. Keller also noted that at this time of year sidewalks fronting student rental property is often not shoveled because no one home (students are on break). However, HPD has developed a letter that they are using to remind people of the City’s snow removal ordinance. The letter also states a day and time by which the resident is required to adhere to the ordinance or be faced with enforcement action and is left on resident doors if the resident is not home. *See example letter attached.*

There was discussion about using PSAs to let people know about the snow removal ordinance. Ms. Dang will create a powerpoint slide for City Span. Also suggested was information in the city’s New Resident Packet, and messages on resident HEC or water bills. Staff will explore those opportunities.

Discussed was the need to remove piled snow at some corners because it causes sight distance problems.

Ms. Rolls suggested that there may be opportunity to coordinate with university students who need community service hours. It was noted that during the December snowfall event that most students were on break and unavailable. Mr. Williams noted that if a snow removal program was established similar to the City’s Adopt-A-Street Program that it would be difficult to enforce and difficult to depend on the group to remove snow within a specified time because they are volunteers.

Sgt. Keller asked if Public Works has considered establishing a Snow Emergency Route, in which vehicles would be prohibited from parking on certain streets during snow events. Virginia Ave. and Main St. are possibly two likely routes. With vehicles restricted from parking on these streets, snow plowing of these streets would be more efficient and better. Mr. Williams answered that Public Works has not considered establishing a Snow Emergency Route, and also noted that it would be a challenge because some residents have no other place to park.

Other Business/ Announcements

7. Safe Routes to School Grant Application for Waterman School

Three infrastructure (project) applications for Waterman Elementary School were submitted to VDOT's Safe Routes to School Program on December 28, 2009. Proposed are new sidewalks along sections of Third St., Stuart St., Virginia Ave., and Chicago Ave., a new pedestrian signal at Third St. and Virginia Ave., a new ADA ramp at 1st St. and Chicago Ave., bicycle lanes along Chicago Ave. from Gay St. to Rockingham Dr., and a new bicycle rack for the school.

The total grant amount requested was \$499,798. Notification of grant award is expected in April 2010.

8. New Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)

FHWA has released a new edition of the MUTCD manual. This manual defines the standards used nationwide to install and maintain traffic control devices on all public streets, highways, bikeways, and private roads open to the public. The manual available online at <http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov>.

9. City Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program (NTCP) Manual

Public Works staff is working on updating the City's NTCP Manual. Items in the manual are being clarified and reorganized, new Education and Encouragement strategies will be described (e.g. Team Up to Slow Down) and criteria for Evaluation and "graduation" of neighborhoods from the NTCP program will be added. Staff expects to share a draft version of the NTCP with the Commission in either February or March.

10. S. High St. & Grace St.

Mr. Eschelmann thanked City staff for the changes to the signal at S. High St. & Grace St.

11. DMV Statistics

Mr. Stader shared that the statewide total fatalities in 2009 are less than 2008, 750 and 821 fatalities, respectively. For the Staunton Region, the fatalities were 129 in 2008 and 127 in 2009. Additionally, the New Year's Eve Holiday Weekend (December 31-Jan 3) fatalities were also less with 5 fatalities in 2008 and 3 fatalities in 2009.

Increased DUI enforcement will take place on Super Bowl Sunday.

12. Harrisonburg Police Statistics

Ofc. Deeds shared that HPD is up 215 traffic chargers and 599 criminal charges from last year's first quarter (October-December) report for the DMV 402 Grant. Noted were gains in speeding and seat belt citations, as well as, increases in underage possessions of alcohol, open container, and drinking in public charges. DUI charges for the quarter were 78 versus 77 the previous year.

NEXT MEETING THURSDAY February 4, 2010 AT 9:00AM at City Municipal Building Room 205, 345 S. Main St.



COL. D.G. HARPER
Chief of Police

City of Harrisonburg, Virginia

POLICE DEPARTMENT

101 North Main Street
Harrisonburg, Virginia 22802

Emergency: 911
Non-Emergency: 540-434-4436

Harrisonburg City ordinance Sec. 6-1-15. Removal of snow, sleet and ice.

It shall be unlawful for the occupant of any building, and where there is no occupant, for the owner of such vacant building, or of any unimproved lot of land lying on any street, alley or public place within the city where there is a paved footway or sidewalk to permit snow to remain along the front or side of such premises longer than three (3) hours after the snow has ceased to fall, except that if the snow shall cease to fall in the night, it shall be cleared away by 10:00 a.m. the following morning. The same requirements shall exist with respect to ice or sleet on sidewalks or footways; except, that when the ice or sleet cannot be removed without injury to the sidewalk or footway, it shall be covered within the period of time specified, with sand, ashes or some other substance which will render it safe for travel. If the occupant or owner of the premises, as the case may be, fails or refuses to clean off the snow in accordance with this section, the chief of police may issue a warrant for violation of this section or cause such pavement or sidewalk to be cleaned at the cost of the occupant or owner, which costs shall be collected in the manner in which fines are collected.
(Code 1973, § 26-19)

This is a reminder the Harrisonburg Police Department has suspended enforcement on this ordinance for the past several weeks, but As of 10:00 AM on Tuesday December 29 you will be required to adhere to this ordinance in its fullest. If you have not complied by the above date and time enforcement action will be taken. If you have any questions regarding this enforcement please contact an HPD officer through the non-emergency ECC number at 540-434-4436

The City with the Manned Future